

IN THE ABSTRACT:

Please amend the Abstract as indicated below:

A method and apparatus are disclosed for alleviating congestion and overload in a
 5 distributed call-processing system interconnected through a packet based network, ~~such as an~~
~~Internet Protocol or an Asynchronous Transfer Mode network.~~ The illustrative Internet Protocol
 network includes a plurality of end terminals and distributed call processors. ~~When an end terminal~~
~~wants to place a call, the end terminal send a call set up message to a call processor.~~ According to
 an aspect of the invention, the call processor will determine whether to process ~~the a call~~ request or
 10 to forward the request to another call processor. Generally, the call processor will declare an
 overload condition if sufficient resources (~~such as including~~ processing or memory resources) are
 not available to process a given call. If a call processor determines that it is too congested to process
 a call, the call processor enters an overload condition, selects an alternate call processor and
 forwards the request to the alternate call processor. ~~A given call processor implicitly announces its~~
 15 ~~overload condition to another call processor by virtue of the forwarded congestion message.~~ Each
 call processor maintains an ordered list of call processors that indicates whether or not each call
 processor is overloaded. ~~The present invention attempts to distribute forwarded congestion~~
~~messages among all of the available alternate call processors, for example, using a last message sent~~
~~flag. Generally, a call processor in an overload condition will not forward another congestion~~
 20 ~~message to a call processor having its last message sent flag set unless there are no other call~~
~~processors available. The congested call processor attaches a call processor identifier to the~~
~~forwarded congestion message, indicating to the recipient call processor that the congested call~~
~~processor is in an overload condition. Thus, a forwarded congestion message will cause the~~
~~recipient call processor to set a flag, for example, in the ordered list of call processors, indicating~~
 25 ~~that the congested call processor is congested. In one embodiment, each congestion flag has an~~
~~associated timer that causes the flag to expire (or reset) after a predefined time interval that permits~~
~~the congested call processor to recover from the overload condition.~~